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THEOPHANIES  
A BOOK OF VERSES  
BY  
EVELYN UNDERHILL



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# THEOPHANIES

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# THEOPHANIES

## A BOOK OF VERSES

BY

EVELYN UNDERHILL



"Every visible and invisible creature  
is a theophany or appearance of God."

*John Scotus Erigena.*

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## FOR HILDA

*Sweet fennel in our garden grows,  
White lavender, and herb of grace.  
Cat-mint and thyme its edges close ;  
It is a green and silver place  
Where marjoram, basil, maudlein, cicely  
Make scented melody.*

*There rosemary and balm are found  
Wherewith the wounds of life are healed ;  
There humble woodruff mats the ground  
And hoards the magic of the field.  
The holy vervein, hyssop, bergamot  
Give blessing to the plot.*

*Those hasty hearts that hurry by  
The coloured borders to applaud  
Know not the hidden worlds that lie  
Within these narrow coffers stored ;  
Yet, to the gentle touch of those who seek,  
The herbs in fragrance speak.*

*Then in the prudent mind's defence  
Of welded thought, a breach is made  
And down the alley-ways of sense  
Strange poignant dreams the soul invade—  
News from beyond our stubborn ramparts blown,  
And here in perfume known.*

*Those ramparts, they are builded tall ;  
But we a secret gate possess  
That opens in the outer wall  
What time its living latch we press :  
A little emerald gate, that sets us free  
Within eternity.*

## NOTE

MANY of the following poems have already appeared in the pages of *The Quest*, *The Nation*, *The New Weekly*, *The Challenge*, and *The Westminster Gazette*. “Prayer” is reprinted from the *Blinded Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Book*, and “William Shakespeare” from *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*. All these are now republished by kind permission of the editors concerned.



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# THEOPHANIES

## MOUNTAIN FLORA

As the plant on the smooth of the hill  
That sees not the deep and the height,  
That knows not the might  
Of the whole—

I am rooted and grounded in him,  
The small leaves of my soul  
Thrust up from his will.

I know not the terrible peak,  
The white and ineffable Thought,  
Whence the hill-torrents flow  
And my nurture is brought.  
I am little and meek;  
I dare not to lift  
My look to his snow,  
But drink, drop by drop, of its gift.

Some say, on the face  
Of that ultimate height  
Small plants have their place:  
Rapt far from our sight  
In the solitude strange

Where the infinite dream mounts range beyond  
range  
To the infinite sky, there they grow.

Where the intellect faints  
In the silence and cold,  
There, humble and glad, their petals unfold.  
As the innocent bell  
Of the Least Soldanella thrusts up through the  
snow,  
So the hearts of the saints  
On the terrible height of the Godhead may dwell;  
Held safe by the Will  
As we, on the smooth of the hill.

## DYNAMIC LOVE

Not to me

The Unmoved Mover of philosophy  
And absolute still sum of all that is,  
The God whom I adore—not this!  
Nay, rather a great moving wave of bliss,  
A surging torrent of dynamic love  
In passionate swift career,  
That down the sheer  
And fathomless abyss  
Of Being ever pours, his ecstasy to prove.

As the glad river's life

More glad becomes in music of much strife,  
So does that spiritual flood  
Dashed in full song,  
In quick stupendous majesty of joy  
The oppositions of the world among,  
Come to fair crest in every breaking bud:  
Yea, can the very conflict's self employ  
A coloured spray of loveliness to fling  
Athwart the world-wide landscape on the wing  
Of every flying thing.

Dynamic love glints gay on the plume's tip  
Of fat and restless wrens, tears at the heart  
From the divine and vibrant bramble wreathes  
That mesh the hedge with beauty. It out-breathes

Fragrance of pure surrender in the smart  
Of sacrificial hay-fields. On the lip  
Of frail ecstatic poppies it brims up,  
As flaming meditations in the soul  
Drowsed with deep passion. E'en the narrow cup  
Of inconspicuous vervein still the strange  
And awful tincture to fulfilment brings:  
There doth my Dear pursue his chemic art,  
And thence distils the magic of the whole.  
For Love is time, succession, ardour, change;  
It is the holy thrust of living things  
That seek a consummation, and enlace  
Some fragment of the All in each fecund embrace  
Whence life again flows forth upon its endless  
chase.

Love ever moves, yet love eternal is;  
Love ever seeks, yet seeks itself to find;  
And, all-surrendered to the leman's kiss,  
Doth but itself with its own passion bind.  
O sacred, ceaseless flow!  
O wondrous meeting  
Of the unchanging and the ever-fleeting,  
That still by the sad way of sorriest lust  
Confers a secret glory on the teeming dust.  
See! by love's loss we find ourselves indeed,  
See! the world's death the world's true life doth  
feed,  
And Love dynamic to Love's rest doth go.

## THE VOICE FROM THE CROSS

## I

“ MAN, 'twas for thee  
God hung upon the Cross and said, ‘ I thirst.’  
Yea! he was broken of thy cruelty.”  
“ Yet God was cruel first.

“ His was the art  
That wreathed the brow of life with thorns of  
    pain.  
He set at his creation’s very heart  
A Lamb that shall be slain.

“ Within the bosom of his thought  
He spun the dreadful pattern of the wild;  
Saw the small beasts within its meshes caught,  
Said it was good—and smiled.

“ His eager will  
Hath taught the cat her gracious spring;  
His flawless skill  
Catches the blackbird on the wing,

“ Contrives the parchèd tongue,  
The gift of water long denied,  
The fury field-mouse slain beside her young,  
The weasel’s quarry—and the way it died.

“ He made the sea: his hand  
Prepared the teeming horrors of the shore,  
The gasping fish tost high upon the strand,  
The starving gull that tore

“ Its poor quick flesh. His wisdom and his power,  
Of their all-knowing choice, all things have made  
In living loveliness and strength to flower  
And on the Cross be laid.

“ From these, the cup  
He feared to drink shall never pass away;  
All things that live with their Creator sup,  
All things the kiss of beauty doth betray,

“ Mocking with sullied breath  
The life it serves and presses to its doom,  
Making of every hill a place of death,  
Each garden plot a tomb.

“ All this his love controlled,  
This he conceived, in this he found his rest:  
The world his everlasting arms enfold  
Lies crushed upon his breast.

“ Taught thus,  
Shall he be grieved that we  
Out of the freedom he hath given us  
Turn upon God with his own cruelty?

“ Ruthless in might  
We know ourselves to be his sons indeed  
Who doth the children for the father smite,  
Pollutes the guiltless seed,

“ Sets the malignant fates  
To play their sorry game of pleasant vice:  
Then, with averted countenance, awaits  
The certain issue of the loaded dice.”

## II

“ In all that is, I dwell:  
I am the Slayer, and I am the Slain.  
Do thou thy deed, and all thing shall be well;  
Bear thou with me my passion and my pain.

“ Secure from harms  
I hold embraced the living and the dead;  
My generous arms  
From nebula to nebula are spread.

“ I am the Victim meet  
Set up in every forest Calvary;  
Mine is the torment of the city street,  
And mine the restless sorrow of the sea.

“ Yea! not alone  
In the sharp throes of man’s self-conscious grief  
I for the error of my world atone;  
Each falling leaf

“ That dying gives its virtue to the sod,  
The anguish of each mother-bird bereaved,  
The patient dying beast—lo! here is God,  
In these my holy spirit is conceived.

“ All growing things that seek  
A harmony and peace as yet unfound  
Of my long passion speak;  
The pregnant ground,

“ The chirping cricket and exultant star,  
The savage tempest and the shattered pine,  
All these the members of my body are  
And bear by right divine

“ The fruitful pangs of my eternal birth;  
Greatest and least, they share my ceaseless  
strife.

In them my saving will thrusts from the earth  
Toward the risen life.

“ In all my creatures’ deaths I too have died;  
My wounded hand the rosy cross unfurled;  
I, risen again, from out my riven side  
Feed and renew the world.

“ Mine is the Voice that cries  
In wood and desert, on the clouds and waves;  
And mine the sacrifice  
That tortures and that saves.”

## IN THE TRAIN

O TRAIN full of blind eyes, rushing through the world,

Fields lie on each side of you,  
Full of life, starting with life; patient, fruitful,  
creative.

Don't you see the divine light lying in the furrows?

Don't you feel the soft hair of the nascent corn?

As for me, the soul spreads out from the body of me;

It passes over all the field, and the field becomes mine—

It and I, close-locked in passionate embrace—  
And the moist ridged field gives itself up to me, all the life of it,

I am caressed by the childish touch of the corn.

My spirit stretches to its borders;

I know the supple curves of resilient bramble,

The obstinate plait of the thicket,

The fringed and secret ditches with their citizens,

The gate of dead timbers that opens upon mysterious roads—

Strange roads, crying to the pilgrim,

Where the feet of the soul may tread to the edge of the world.

All this is mine, and more, for I have the heart of  
the field;

I explore with tentative touch the maternal soil,  
I know the recurring beat of the life within.

For me the innocent water shines in the furrow,  
Steadfastly contemplating the infinite sky

As a mirror of prayer that lays itself out to the  
light.

Life is there, new life that awaits my worship;  
And fading life, more holy, that dies to serve the  
unborn.

Where the long hedge leans to leeward  
One little sharp, upstarting leaf I find;  
And deep within the hearted curl of it,  
Secret and strong as the wistful dream of a  
virgin,

The bud that shall bear the immortal germ on its  
way—

Small, humble, uncounted,

Pricking the path the future shall tread to the  
light.

Haste! haste! says the train, for life is movement  
itself.

Why should we haste? God is here.

He is within and without: though we grow tall,  
he comes no nearer;

Though we make haste, the earth flies faster still,  
Ceaselessly treading her ritual dance in the skies,  
Yet never removed from her place on the bosom of  
God.

You shall not achieve him, train scampering  
through the world;

You shall not achieve him, souls adventuring in  
the void.

Under the curve of my hedge is a life more lovely.

Not sad! not ambitious!

Meek, faithful, august;

Beautifully moving towards the bridal of death.

## NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

## I

NIGHT on the mountain. Soon I may not see  
The sharp and spreading map,  
The chequer-world of man's hard husbandry.  
Comes white as wool the cloud veil that shall cap  
The peak whereon I stand and stretch to thee.

Night on the mountain. Soft and silently  
Out from their little dens the furred things creep:  
They will not sleep  
With valley-dwelling man, but wake to thee.  
The fox from out its hole, the night bird from its  
nest,  
I with the rest,  
Yet not from any dear and hearted home  
But from long exile come.

Long exile in the puzzling world, when all  
Thy veils were close and bright  
And picture set; yea, as a storied pall  
Concealed thy night.

Long pilgrimage within the twisting lanes,  
The deep and scented lanes, that wandered slow  
Athwart the sleek profusion of the plains  
But dared not seek  
The solitary peak  
To which thy lovers go.

Now the old words that once were mine and thine  
Come to the lips and echo in the ear,  
Now the white cloud draws near  
And stills the restless limbs and shuts the peering  
sight  
From all thing save thy night—  
The caverned door of our unshuttered shrine.

## II

Strange, holy night, Eternity's caress,  
Most apt for happy lovers to enjoy;  
Thou dost redeem the foolish dreams of men  
Bewildered by the dreadful day's employ.  
How the white flowers upon thy breast do burn  
And tell thy dark excesses. Thou dost turn  
Each candid primrose to a moon of light;  
Thou dost enchant the fingers of the fern  
Stretched from the woodland to asoil our sight  
From the sharp day's distress.  
When homely shapes put on a priestly dress,  
When from the dewy fields new presences arise  
And grave trees standing there  
Lift up great arms in prayer;  
When the dim ground  
Hath soft mysterious movements of desire  
And every hill converses with the skies—  
'Tis then  
Our little star at home in heaven is found,  
And we and it are gathered to thy heart.  
Then muted adoration hath its part,

Then comes the hush of grace and wraps us round,  
Then comes the flame of love and gives us of its fire.  
Then, undistracted by the heady sun,  
We are with thee as once ere all began,  
Made partners with the ardent worlds that run  
Across thy bosom's span;  
Knowing themselves to be  
Radiant of love and light because they rest in thee.

Dear night, I love thee. Take me by the hand,  
Make thou the ferment of my thought to cease.  
Teach me thy wisdom. Let me understand  
Thine unstruck music. Give my soul release  
From the day's glare and din.  
Lift thou the latch, that I may push the gate  
And let my Darling in.  
He stands without, he wearies not to wait  
Before my threshold till  
Thou hast made all things proper to our state  
And every voice is still.  
Then thou and he shall enter side by side,  
Thy banner shall he set above his bride,  
The curtains of thy splendour shall be spread  
About our marriage bed.

## CLOUDY WEATHER

THE sky was broidered o'er with cloud to-day,  
Wonderful to the sight:

Golden and grey,  
Sombre and pale,  
Silver and white.

Pinnacled fanes were there, and little flocks at  
play;  
And who should miss the heavens, when this their  
veil  
So great is, and so gay?

But as I watched there came a little breeze,  
And moved them to more wondrous fantasies,  
And took their shapes, and hurled  
Cloud-world incredible upon cloud-world.

And lo! a sudden rift;  
And there peeped out at me  
One little magic patch of innocence  
Most sweet to see,  
That did the heart uplift,  
And carry thence  
Into the unwalled solitudes of light  
My sad industrious sight,  
That was so busy with the cloud's pretence.

O purging wind!

Blow down the skies again,

Scatter the clever cloud-drift of the mind,

The strangely sculptured vapours of the brain;

And let his blue

Peep through.

One little space of clear,

That steadfast smiles between the moving thought

All in grey mazes wrought:

As the deep glance

Suddenly caught

Of loving eyes that watch us through the dance,

Mimics his art,

And strikes a blessed stillness to the heart,

And says: "My Dear!"

## SAFETY

Most wonderful, most deep security  
That circles in the soul at hours of pain.  
When the assaulting harms  
Of death and love and treachery set on,  
When we must con  
The dreadful lessons of mortality;  
Then do we know the pressure of thine arms!  
Held to thy heart  
Shall we complain  
That here we find our sharpest griefs again?  
Within that wide and piteous embrace  
All torment, as all rapture, finds a place.

Give me a part,  
Exultant anguish cries aloud to thee,  
In the sharp pangs of thy felicity—  
The hard perpetual birth  
Of beauty, music, mirth—  
For I would share  
E'en thy self-mergence in the world's despair.  
Lifted with the long movement of thy breath,  
That draws toward the secret sum of life  
And outward rushes to the world of death,  
Gladly I go  
From utmost ecstasy to sorriest strife,  
For well I know  
It is the Heart of God that sways me so:  
Thereon I rest, therewith I sweetly move,  
Rocked by the rhythmic process of his love.

## FELL ASLEEP

M. C., NOVEMBER 16TH, 1913

HE does not sleep.

How could that eager mind be stilled by death?  
How shall the heart that did such commerce keep  
Cease with the body's breath  
To throb with the world's joys and agonies?  
These were his life, and these  
His life shall be:  
The love-emblazoned robes of immortality.

Lo! the free soul, that once the brain did fret  
With dreadful limitations, and make vain  
Its upward-soaring passion, doth forget  
That intellectual pain.

Joyful it spreads its wings  
On the one ultimate flight toward the edge of  
things;  
Yet does not roam  
From the remembering heart, wherein it makes its  
home.

## NEBULA AND NEST

## I

I HAVE fled far!

I have not stayed my quest for any star  
That in my pathway stood  
And sang in the soul's ear,  
"Behold the Good!"

But I have sought the sphere  
Wherein his thought immense—  
His love, his dream,  
His ardent seeking sense  
Of uttermost exactitudes that seem  
All novelty and flow and wilful change—  
Crest upward first toward creative joy:  
And from the dreadful range  
Of absolute and unconditioned Mind  
Door of deliverance find  
In sweet employ.

I stretched upon his storm my fragile wings,  
And went with the great wind  
That poured its music through the frame of things.  
Dreadful was the embrace  
To which we rushed beyond the edge of space:  
For he that is all-loving would immerse  
His fulhead in the Nought,  
His immemorial thought

Utter through strife.  
Yea! as melodic fire  
That sought the consummation of desire  
All down the exultant trumpet of the skies,  
Athwart the spreaded strings  
Of vibrant light,  
There was our flight,  
And as a speedful song was our emprise.

So have I seen the sacred stream of life  
In one swift act sublime  
Enter our universe;  
The bridal of eternity and time.  
Then in the womb of darkness there began  
Soft movements of maternal energy,  
And golden filaments of life that ran  
Athwart the dim.  
Then first was laid the plan  
That builded upward to the soul of man  
And bore to him  
Far in the wild  
A veritable child.

## II

Yea, I have travelled far,  
I have not stayed my quest for any star  
Nor found in any sun the light I need:  
Authentic converse with the unconfined  
This might alone suffice mine avid mind,  
This might alone my hungry spirit feed.

Now in and in I come,  
Out of the mists of distant nebulæ  
Swing again home:  
Entering at last,  
The edgeless solitudes of God o'erpassed,  
That one warm narrow place  
Where mind is free  
From the terrific liberties of space  
And the heart best  
Can make for him a nest.  
And as the palmer, coming home again  
From the sweet Sepulchre,  
Finds Christ afield amongst his fellow men  
And summed in her  
Who waits him, all his portion of that grace  
Which shone from Mary's face:  
So the pale skies  
All lucent with God's love  
And the swift cloudy spirits that arise  
Wistful of some unthought divine surprise  
Full friendly prove  
To this my quest, and heal my hungry pain.  
Yet softly say, "In vain  
Thy pilgrim's scrip and all thy traveller's state.  
As we around the earth in pageant go  
Yet to no goal attain,  
Thou dost but tread the orbit of thy brain  
In thine ecstatic flight  
That would achieve his dread excess of bright.  
Not so  
The limited the Limitless may know.

## THEOPHANIES

Wait, pilgrim, wait!  
Cleanse thou thy sight,  
Prepare thine ear,  
To see him in his light,  
The flowering of his melody to hear.  
His feet are on the road: stay thou at home.  
He shall appoint a meeting when he come.”

## III

How still it is!  
And yet there's music here,  
Music alone goes with me all the way  
Divinely clear.  
Thou dost beat out at me  
From the leaves of the chestnut tree,  
Here at my window peeping as I pray,  
Thy very Self-hood's bliss  
In life's rich fugue confessed;  
Thy heart's dear melody  
By crescent form expressed.  
And I, that all the fervours of the abyss  
Might not delay,  
Am caught in thy bird's nest—  
Meet shelter of the smallest soul that sings—  
Find, nestling warm against a feathery breast,  
My long-sought rest,  
And fold my weary wings.

## HEAVEN—PURGATORY—HELL

"The soul, when it departs from the body, needs not to go far: for where the body lies, there is Heaven and Hell."—*Jacob Boehme.*

CLOSE-RANKED within my room they stand,  
The holy spirits of the dead.  
Some grope the air with piteous hand  
Of newly blind, who would be led  
They know not where, and cannot rest:  
But some with seeing eyes are blest.

A solemn light enfolds them all:  
It is a light they never knew.  
To some it is a fiery pall  
That burns their vision; but a few,  
With closed eyes, in ecstasy  
Rejoice within the flame to be.

For these are they that eager sought  
The love which purges earthly stain,  
And lavenders the tainted thought  
And brings its fragrance back again:  
Content its anguish to endure  
If so their vision may be pure.

Steadfast they stand: they do not fear  
The faithful sculpture of the flame  
That makes the holy outline clear  
And brings to light the hidden name—

## THEOPHANIES

Long hid beneath the rust of earth—  
Which sealed the splendour of their birth.

But some there are who cannot stay  
And bear the burning of the fire:  
Pursued upon their endless way  
By onslights of unstilled desire  
As by a rushing hungry wind,  
They have no skill release to find.

On baffling gales of passion driven  
They sweep the peaceful ranks above;  
As scudding clouds, by tempest riven,  
Across the starry spaces move  
And cast their tattered shadows down  
On patient field and ordered town.

Sad, fevered lovers who in vain  
Pursue the last consummate hour,  
Some final ecstasy to drain,  
Its dread sufficing sweets devour—  
So, by the lust of God possessed,  
The damned pursue their ceaseless quest.

Avid they are, they know not why;  
They seek, and know not what they crave;  
But stream across that homely sky  
Wherfrom the blest all comfort have.  
Fiercely they hunt their final bliss,  
Nor mark the changeless joys they miss—

The glad surrender of the bright  
And sparkling souls, that unafraid,  
Deep drowned within the burning light  
Are partners of its radiance made;  
Nor know themselves, save as they shine  
Within the heart of Love divine.

All have they found, for all they lost,  
Nor restless sought their own to win;  
But reckoning not the final cost  
They plunged the healing flame within,  
As happy swimmers bold to leap  
And trust their bodies to the deep.

All souls within my room are met:  
Here glows the heavenly light and fire,  
Here is the place of cleansing set,  
And here the hell of false desire.  
Yea! here is God, in whose embrace  
Each living spirit finds its place.

## THE TREE

SPREAD, delicate roots of my tree,  
Feeling, clasping, thrusting, growing;  
Sensitive pilgrim root tips roaming everywhere.  
Into resistant earth your filaments forcing,  
Down in the dark, unknown, desirous:  
The strange ceaseless life of you, eating and drink-  
ing of earth,  
The corrosive secretions of you, breaking the stuff  
of the world to your will.

Tips of my tree in the springtime bursting to  
terrible beauty,  
Folded green life, exquisite, holy, exultant;  
I feel in you the splendour, the autumn of ripe  
fulfilment,  
Love and labour and death, the sacred pageant of  
life.  
In the sweet curled buds of you,  
In the opening glory of leaves, tissues moulded of  
green light;  
Veined, cut, perfect to type,  
Each one like a child of high lineage bearing the  
sigil of race.

The open hands of my tree held out to the touch of  
the air  
As love that opens its arms and waits on the lover's  
will;  
The curtsey, the sway, and the toss of the spray as  
it sports with the breeze;  
Rhythrical whisper of leaves that murmur and  
move in the light;  
Crying of wind in the boughs, the beautiful music  
of pain:  
Thus do you sing and say  
The sorrow, the effort, the sweet surrender, the joy.

Come! tented leaves of my tree;  
High summer is here, the moment of passionate  
life,  
The hushed, the maternal hour.  
Deep in the shaded green your mystery shielding,  
Heir of the ancient woods and parent of forests  
to be,  
Lo! to your keeping is given the Father's life-  
giving thought;  
The thing that is dream and deed and carries the  
gift of the past.  
For this, for this, great tree,  
The glory of maiden leaves, the solemn stretch of  
the bough,  
The wise persistent roots  
Into the stuff of the world their filaments forcing,  
Breaking the earth to their need.

Here is eternity's sword that pricks through the  
scabbard of time,

Here is the virginal life that waits on the lover's  
will.

How subtle the Spirit's path!

How silent the quickening rites!

No anguish of frustrate desire,

No madness of impotent strife,

Refusal and terror and rapture, craving with-  
drawal and grief.

Tall tree, your name is peace.

You are the channel of God:

His mystical sap,

Elixir of infinite love, syrup of infinite power,

Swelling and shaping, brooding and hiding,

With out-thrust of delicate joy, with pitiless  
pageant of death,

Sings in your cells;

Its rhythmical cycle of life

In you is fulfilled.

His drama of birth and decay, his dance of renewal  
and rest,

Simply, without reluctance,

These have you played.

His patient wintry faith, invincible

As the long dreams of leafless branches are,

The urgent hope of his eternal spring,

His charity, as summer charged with life

That dies into an autumn of rich deed—

These you proclaim.

## APOCALYPSE

“ I saw,” said John the Seer,  
“ New heaven and new earth.” But I, each day,  
Behold thy new creation that draws near  
On every budding spray.  
Yea, down the stream of time the thundering hoofs  
I hear  
Of horses shining white and strangely grey,  
That bear upon their way  
The kings of death and life, the true and faithful  
kings.

“ I saw,” said John the Seer,  
“ The Mother of all life, her travailings.”  
But I have seen the birth of many a year,  
And lovely childish things  
Snatched back to God, because they are so dear  
No haven can avail, save his enshrouding wings.  
I’ve known the sudden palms of many springs  
Pass, like a fleeting sacrament of grace.

“ I saw,” said John the Seer,  
“ The Ever-living One, his awful face.”  
I in deep pools and clear  
Have plunged my look, to trace  
Faint and austere

In some uncharted place  
Secure from flitting time, released from narrow  
space,  
The First and Last, the Beauty new and old.

“ I saw,” said John the Seer,  
“ The dreadful judgments of his wrath unfold.”  
I am not thus. I know not how to fear  
That love which drew the crocus from the mould:  
Nor, whilst the skylark’s song is in mine ear,  
Can hear a sterner voice than that which told  
His vengeful hosts their fury to withhold  
From green things, grass, and trees,  
Lest hurt should fall on these;  
And said, that when his heaven indeed was come,  
With men his tent should be, with men his wander-  
ing home,  
And God should heal their griefs, and wipe away  
each tear.

## CONTINUOUS VOYAGE

At twilight, when I lean the gunwale o'er—  
And watch the water turning from the bow,  
I sometimes think the best is here and now—  
The voyage all, and nought the hidden shore.  
Is there no help? and must we make the land?  
Shall every sailing in some haven cease?  
And must the chain rush out, the anchor strike the  
sand,  
And is there from its fetters no release?  
And shall the Steersman's voice say, "Nevermore  
The ravening gale, the soft and sullen fog,  
No more the cunning shoal, the changeful ebb and  
flow.  
Put up the charts, and take the lead below,  
And close the vessel's log"?

Adventure is a seaman's life, the port  
Calls but the weary and the tempest driven:  
Perhaps its safety were too dearly bought  
If that for this our freedom must be given.  
For lo! our Steersman is for ever young  
And with much gladness sails beneath the stars;  
Our ship is old, yet still her sails are hung  
Like eager wings upon the steady spars.  
Then tell me not of havens for the soul  
Where tides can never come, nor storms molest;

My sailing spirit seeks no sheltered goal,  
Nought is more sad than safety—life is best  
When every day brings danger for delight,  
And each new solemn night  
Engulfs our whitening wake within the whole.

Beyond the bent horizon oceans are  
Where every star  
Lies like an isle upon Eternity.  
There would I be  
Given to his rushing wind,  
No prudent course to find  
For some snug corner of Infinity;  
But evermore to sail  
Close-reefed before the gale,  
And see the steep  
Great billow of his love, with threatening foam,  
Come roaring home  
And lift my counter in its mighty sweep.

## ON READING DOSTOIEFFSKY

HERE's a new soul unveiled, all trembling fire;  
As fire unstable, eager, tender, fierce;  
With sudden pains our sodden thought to pierce  
And lights and ardours apt for all desire.

Here's sordid, holy man, all mind and mire,  
Deep wells are here for storing of slow tears,  
Grey sterile tracks down-trodden by hard years,  
Quick saving dreams that from the slime aspire.

And as some tarnished mirror full of flaws,  
Strange crooked faults, deep cracks that twist the  
rays,

May catch the sunny splendour, and because  
Of those same scars, flash back a sparkling light;  
So, keen and fair, to mock our scornful sight,  
This broken glass the Kingly Face displays.

## LILA, THE PLAY OF GOD

"The whole world, says Kabir, rests in his play; yet still the Player remains unknown."—*Poems of Kabir*.

*What the sport, and what the aim,  
Shrouded Player of the Game?*

Lord, the magic of thy play,  
Ever changing, never still,  
It enchanteth the dreaming heart,  
It enslaveth the restless will,  
Calls it to the player's part.

All the moving scheme of creatures,  
Running, flitting, growing, dying,  
Rippling moods thy changeful features  
Quick reflect: the voices crying  
News of anguish and delight,  
Certitudes of swift decay.

O the rush of birds in flight!

O the blazon of the may!

Holy fading of the day,

Mystery of marshes lying

Faint and still beneath the sky,

While the solemn clouds go by

And their massy shadows creep

Grey upon the glistering sheep.

*Noble sport and mighty aim,  
Shrouded Player of the Game.*

Lord, the terror of thy play  
Thrusting ruthless to its goal,  
It affrights the seeking heart,  
Troubles the astonished soul;  
Warns it from the player's part.  
Tramp of armies on their way  
Lust of battle to fulfil,  
Quick to maim and quick to slay,  
Docile to the urgent will:  
Stealthy tread of hungry beasts,  
Strong and subtle, all their art  
Framed to stalk and framed to kill,  
Careless of the victim's smart.  
Teeming life of worm and louse,  
Guests at thine ignoble feasts;  
Seething life of secret things;  
Commerce of the charnel house  
Carried upon countless wings—

*Strange the sport, and dark the aim,  
Shrouded Player of the Game.*

In the town thy pieces move  
Here and there, to serve the plan.  
Some from off the board are swept,  
Some in misery are kept,  
Crushed by toil and racked by love;  
Kept, they say, to play the man.  
There within the netted streets,  
Leashed and hooded, human dreams  
Strive for light and air and peace,  
Strive to compass their release

From the dreadful life that seems:  
There thy watching mind defeats  
Every move the captives make.  
There for some poor folly's sake  
Every day a piece is lost—  
Lured by lust and joy and wealth,  
Lost to love and peace and health—  
Dost thou stay to count the cost?  
Reckoning in the mighty plan  
All the sins and griefs of man?  
There the harlot's venom'd breast  
Lulls the weary lad to rest,  
Sacrificing with her scented breath  
Victims to thy dance of death:  
Dost thou smile that wreck to see?  
Is the sport so gay to thee?

*Cruel sport, and dreadful aim,  
Shrouded Player of the Game.*

Lord, the horror of thy play,  
How shall man forgive thee this?  
How accept his tardy bliss,  
Purge the stain of life away?  
Squalor to attaint the good,  
Soil the sweetness of his mood,  
Foulness in his daily food,  
Angels in his ear to cry,  
“Thou shalt kill, or thou shalt die.”

*What the sport, and what the aim,  
Shrouded Player of the Game?*

## THE DAY BEFORE

I THOUGHT, when they said that this must be,  
I should turn and cling to thy friendship then—  
That secret bond between me and thee—

Clean away from the world of men.

But now from my window I lean and pore  
On the rich thick life that goes past the door:  
I cannot think of the Spirit more.

I know one should live detached from things;  
And I thought I did, till they sent me here.  
It's strange how the tide of feeling brings  
New loves and hates, as the knife draws near.  
I love the sky. There's a moon to-night!  
Am I going away from the heaven of sight?  
*Can* the eyeless soul apprehend the light?

To-night to strive on my lonely bed  
With the sick dismay of the frightened flesh:  
To-morrow, perhaps, the Fisherman Dread,  
Trawling the world, will catch in his mesh,  
Sleeping under the surgeon's hand,  
The growing life whose delights I planned—  
And I? Shall I watch and understand?

What will it seem to my soul, I wonder,  
The cleavage made in the woven dress?  
Will it feel that its home is rent asunder?  
Will it shrink and flee from the knife's caress?  
I think it will slip from the drowsy brain,  
Lift the latch of the house of pain,  
And tread the invisible tracks again.

There shall I watch while the slit is made,  
The red sharp breach in the city wall,  
And the secret net of its streets displayed;  
Displayed to the intimate gaze of all.  
Far off I shall stand, and at last shall see  
The thing they have always confused with me.  
What will that hour of vision be?

But now I am safe on the homely earth,  
Safe in the skein of things that grow.  
I cling to my place on that wheel of birth,  
I love its noise and its movement so.  
Easy and light is the body's yoke—  
See! the curve of the mounting smoke.  
Hark! 'twas the voice of the street that spoke.

## A LONDON FLOWER SHOW

SEE the faces of the flowers,  
Strange and fair,  
Watching through the weary hours  
Whilst the herded humans stare.

Like country saints brought up to town  
From cloistering wood and lonely down,  
Remote they seem;  
Wrapt in a wistful dream  
Of upland meadows fragrant to the sun,  
Rich with an ardent life for ever new-begun,  
And quickening winds that go  
With ghostly steps across the supple grass,  
Shaking from all who grow  
Music of adoration as they pass.  
In this sad air, they say,  
No plant can pray.

Here is a daffodil,  
Six-winged, as seraphs are;  
They took her from a Spanish hill,  
Wild as a wind-blown star.  
When she was born  
The angels came  
And showed her how her petals should be worn.  
Now she is tame,  
She hath a Latin name.

There, set in mimic rock—  
As if to mock

The ultimate austerities of love  
That must in poverty its passion prove—  
A mountain hermit in his fury dress;  
Brought from the creviced height where he alone  
    Sang from the sheltering stone  
    Perpetual psalm of joy,  
And did his private ecstasy confess;  
    Forced to disclose  
The secret that he whispered to the snows,  
And sold to make a gardening woman's toy.

Yet, with their homesick eyes  
    As other saints,  
So these evangelise:  
Into our smutty streets, where beauty faints,  
    Bringing authentic news  
    Of Paradise.  
How shall a flower refuse  
In heathen lands her gospel to declare?  
    Doth she not wear  
The sacred sigil of the Only Fair?  
    In this shut room  
    She may not bloom  
With the exuberant splendour of the free,  
Crying in coloured joy her crescent ecstasy:  
    But still,  
    As generous lovers will,  
She can exult to share his saving pain:  
    And, exiled from the field,  
    Her wild sweet magic yield  
As part of Perfect Beauty's passion to be slain.

## PRIMAVERA

Who knows the spring?  
He, when he lays his hands  
On any growing thing  
Discerns the pulse of God, and understands  
How that the Father's heart  
Thrusts forth in steady rhythm of charity  
To every part  
His life and energy.

Not the soft vision of the feathered dove  
To tell of grace inshed  
He needs, whose subtle love  
Can pierce the secret of the copse. Instead  
He sees the living earth renew her plumes,  
With sudden joy outspread  
Her wide green wing  
And sing  
As once again her chorric office she resumes.

Lapped all in God  
And with maternal love encompassed round  
How shall we wonder at the teeming sod,  
The mesh of beauty spread upon the ground?  
Keep rather your amaze  
For sterile days  
And silent stony stars,

Wherefrom the youthful Shepherd of the skies  
Piping a song forever incomplete  
    Calls forth no answering lays  
Of lesser whitethroats busy in the bough,  
    Nor living loveliness  
Of melilot upspringing from the plough.  
    No woodruff to make sweet  
    The path before his feet,  
Nor banners of the beech leaves overhead;  
    But foul distress  
Of naked craters grinning to the light,  
    Dead forests, sapless spars  
Whence never sudden scents redeem the night,  
And grievous meadows where no lark can rise.

There the sequestered spirits of the dead  
Go chattering down the windy loneliness  
Like thin brown leaves that winter left behind;  
They seek for evermore, and cannot find  
    The vernal fire  
That lights old tissues with renewed desire.  
    There those who cannot love  
    Hell's solitude must prove,  
What time the passionate and immortal spring  
Goes forth all-conquering.

    But there's another land  
Where the green banners do eternal stand:  
    Where the brave seeds,  
The dry and shrivelled seeds whereof we said  
    That they were surely dead,  
    Start from their sleep, and grow.

Urged of a hidden spark, they push toward the light

Plumes of delight

And thrust their eager roots into his night.

And so

Since at the heart of God it's ever spring

And all that lives is but the blossoming

Of his sweet stretching boughs, with tufted beauty  
wrought,

That bud in joyful deeds

And flower in deathless dreams more strange than  
thought;

These, grafted on his spray,

Fed on his sap alway,

Are born again

To share his vernal reign.

What time the restless earth

Draws near to April's heart, we for an hour

Partake that mystic birth;

Touch the sharp vigour of eternity

And taste the freshness of their ecstasy

Whose love is power,

Whose rapture of creation, never still,

Is nourished of his will.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

*Immediate light, ablaze, enfolding me ;  
And in its mesh some slow-distilling truth  
That comes with subtle touch to stir the mind,  
And catch the heart to rapture.*

No heaven-high dream, remote, unearthly, dread,  
The glory I declare: turn, turn, and see  
Adventurous love, that leaps from out the world  
Served by sweet growth.  
In every twig and blade  
I know the advent of my Saviour-God :  
His moving thought is music in the wind,  
The shining sword of his ascending life  
Pricks the parched earth. In the unmeasured sky,  
In the uncounted planets of the sand  
Whose paces tell the rhythm of his joy,  
In the bird's sudden note, I savour him ;  
And closer still he comes—  
Comes, with his subtle touch to stir the mind,  
And catch the heart to rapture.

Born kindred of the earth, burned by great rays  
Of grace, impregnate with reality—  
Where should I go, but to the lonely wild ?  
Far from the dreadful circle of good men  
Who play at godliness, here will I wait

The Strong, the Pure, the Tameless, who shall come.

His feet shall be within the ceaseless stream  
Which sets towards the Sea. He shall endure  
Unresting change; yet to his steadfast eyes  
Winged life shall mediate Eternity,  
And on his ears shall fall  
The solemn music of creative joy.  
He shall discern the unreal from the real,  
He shall strike fire from out the souls of men;  
He shall emancipate all fettered loves  
And bring to birth the hidden Sons of God  
Of whom Creation travails until now.

## FLOODED FIELDS

As stilled and shining waters tell the sky,  
And seem to bring celestial spaces near,  
So may thy grace upon my spirit lie  
To image forth the clear.

Let the floods rest which thou hast caused to be,  
That those who look may there a vision find  
Which I perhaps shall never come to see  
Upon the troubled surface of the mind.

Deep would I have the heart's poor meadow hid,  
Its sterile shame, its wreck of seasons past:  
Litter of twigs, that once were living wood,  
The mouldering straw of crops that withered fast,  
The barren plot where wheat hath never stood,  
Mat of dead leaves, where first the wind-flower  
grew—

By these thy grateful waters I am rid  
Of that unhappy landscape, staring to the blue.

Patient is love, mighty and unafraid,  
Steadfast its waters lie upon the land:  
Yet not for desolation's sake they made  
Man's husbandry as nought. Where the floods  
stand

Solemn and pale,  
There in the darkness pricks the crescent blade.  
Yea, when thou dost depart thy lustral veil—

Dread sacrament of mercy and new birth—  
And the deep-sunken fields pass from their purging  
night,  
Then shall be cry of mirth;  
The song of eager life, that leaps to meet the light.

Ah, not in pride they flower before thy face  
That knew the visitations of resistless grace.  
These shall not ask the dower of standing sheaves,  
These may not yield the substance of thy bread;  
But the small turf, inset with daisied leaves,  
They give, wherewith life's simplest creatures may  
be fed.

## PRAYER

WHEN the soul yields to prayer  
The gate made of jacinth  
Swings, stands ajar.  
Scents out of heavenly places  
Storm the sad air  
On the gale that blows in the unmeasured spaces  
Which link star to star.  
Eyes shut to the landscape here where we are  
Open elsewhere  
When the soul yields to prayer.

The soul deep in prayer  
As a hyacinth  
Stretcheth forth from its pillar of bloom  
Feelers of fragrance unseen  
To the edge of the room.  
So, held still and serene,  
Of its outpouring gift unaware,  
With radiance redeeming the gloom,  
With sweetness assaulting the air,  
Is the soul deep in prayer.

In the triumph of prayer  
Twofold is the spell.  
With the folding of hands  
There's a spreading of wings,



Thou shalt not hear its news, nor its retreat  
discover.  
No! 'tis a dance  
Where love perpetual,  
Rhythmical,  
Musical,  
Maketh advance  
Loved one to lover.

## II

Heaven's not a rest.  
No! but to battle with new zest:  
Untired, with warrior-joy  
The sharp clean spirit to employ  
On life's new enterprise.  
It's the surprise  
Of keen delighted mind  
That wakes to find  
Old fetters gone,  
Strong shining immortality put on.

## III

Heaven is to be  
In God at last made free,  
There more and more  
Strange secrets of communion to explore:  
Within the mighty movements of his will  
Our tangled loves fulfil:  
To pluck the rosemary we cannot reach  
With the mind's span,  
And so at last  
Breathe the rich fragrance of our hoarded past  
And learn the slow unfolding of the plan.  
Together to unroll  
The blazoned story of the pilgrim soul;  
All the long ardent pain,  
The craving and the bliss at last made plain.  
Sometimes to sleep  
Locked each to each  
Within his deep,  
Or playing in his wave  
The sudden splendour of the flood to brave:  
Great tide of his undimmed vitality  
That breaks in beauty on the world's wide beach  
And draws all life again toward its heart,  
Stirring to new and mutual increase  
Love-quickenèd souls therein that have their part,  
Therein that find their peace.

## NATURE

## I

THE anguish, the lostness: my Dear,  
 Set so close to my hand,  
 Of all near things most near,  
 Murmuring within mine ear  
 A music that I may not understand:  
 Light of all light,  
 Soul of enshrouding night,  
 The subtle joy shook out from sullen pain,  
 The wonder that atones for the world's wrong,  
 New splendour on the corn,  
 New freshness of the morn,  
 Secret of every wind,  
 Fragrance of every song  
 So nearly known, yet ever sought in vain.

## II

Soft the note strikes and clear,  
 All to make plain:  
 Theme of the ceaseless melody,  
 Clue to the hidden harmony—  
 And lo! it's gone, merged in the throstle's cry.  
 Again,  
 Sometimes from out the throng  
 There comes a glance, intolerably sweet,  
 And I,  
 All radiant in the gladness of surprise,

Turn swift to greet  
 Those all-revealing eyes,  
 That look, so deep, so kind,  
 That vision full of grace  
 Which I have waited long,  
 Ah! long and ardently—  
 Only to see

Thy veil, O Nature, that conceals from me  
 The one desirèd face:  
 My Dear One, whom I cannot touch or find.

## III

Thou art a priest, O Nature, and from thee  
 All who believe  
 Assuredly receive

Enshrined in many a changeful accident  
 The substance of the only sacrament:

Yet, as some vagrant soul  
 That comes to the Graal Castle unaware  
 May not discern within the outward sign  
 The taste of the incomparable wine

Nor know

That it is fed

Of the sufficing bread;

Because the proffered fragment is so fair  
 It cannot pass beyond, to find the Whole

Embosomed there—

E'en so

I cannot find my Dear, for he is hid  
 Within thy living symbols, that conceal  
 The simple, secret thing they promise to reveal.

## IV

I ask not beauty, but a little space  
Swept clear for him;  
Some naked place,  
Intimate, dim;  
Some haven where the fretted mind may rest,  
Where thy quick colour and inconstant sound  
At last are steadfast found,  
And beyond thought all in one Thought are blest.  
Just to be rid  
Of this bewildering light,  
That sets the world ablaze, and dazzles my poor  
sight  
With all the teeming phantoms of thine art;  
Just once between  
The shifting splendours of the natural scene  
To glimpse the faithful star.  
For still, athwart the glamour thou dost fling  
I hear the voice of One, the lost fair holy thing,  
Crying to my heart—  
Not from a distant land,  
Nay, at my very hand—  
“How far thou art from me: how far! how far!”

## PHILOSOPHERS

SOME with their little taper dwell alone  
    Snug in a shuttered room,  
    Nor probe the outer gloom:

Some, with a searchlight quartering the unknown,  
    Mistake its ray  
    For the eternal day.

Some, as the alchemist amongst his jars,  
    Explore to find  
    The essence of the mind;

But some, like mirrors turned towards the stars  
    Athwart the night,  
    Meekly receive faint light.

These ask not sorry reason to dissect  
    The rays that bless  
    With delicate caress:

Simply they take and simply they reflect  
    Gladly, in awe.  
    No crooked flaw

Breaks the white surface of their waiting thought:  
    Patient they kneel,  
    Content to feel

The pricking shaft of wisdom all unsought,  
    That to the heart  
    Its magic does impart.

## THEOPHANIES

The empty freedom of uncharted space  
In vain we rove;  
Their quiet love  
Is to the inshed beam abiding-place,  
And gives again  
To other men—  
Being the mirror of Infinity  
Wherein may shine  
Its galaxies divine—  
The image of those stars we cannot see  
Who have not eyes  
For that far enterprise.

## THE SUMMIT

I WALKED alone upon the fell,  
The upland was in solemn mood;  
About me in their holiness,  
As seers within a vision dwell,  
    The idle mountains stood.

Horned moss and sundew, as a live caress,

    Leaned to my feet,  
The air was sharp and sweet;

Even the woolly peoples of the place  
    Wore a transfigured face,

And all the landscape was of lonely hills.

    Thus poised above the deep  
To gaze upon his steep  
My need, I said, fulfils:  
    Why should I climb?

Seen from the height, the hills were less sublime.

    There was a guide  
Invisible, went ever at my side.  
He said, "Poor timid thing, that cannot dare  
    To risk the upper air,  
        The hard ascent  
And stony summits, but would ever go  
Just high enough for beauty and too low  
For desolation, you shall never know,  
    Thus sheltered by the ring

Of noble dreams and mounting thoughts, the sting  
Of truth, the wide horizons of the real.

Turn from the fair,  
Climb, strive, slip, fall upon the pent  
Of his steep home,  
Until you come,  
Breathless and spent,  
To the bare summits that his world reveal."

So I went  
With anguish and great toil, and came at last—  
All joy, all hope long past—  
To stand  
Where the slope fell away on every hand.  
Here was the arid rock: not any flower  
Nor mosses grew,  
A pure cold wind most terrible in power  
Upon the summit blew.  
A great bird started there  
And wheeled and rose  
And stood straight winged upon the vivid air.  
Then said my secret guide: "Behold his view."  
And far below  
I saw outspread the coloured show;  
The regiments of the trees, fields yellow with full  
grain,  
The magpie-flash that marks the moving train,  
The shine of living water, saw I from mine height  
All wrapped in sweet blue light:  
The knotted towns in smoky dreams held close,  
Clean roads therefrom that ran

As eager thoughts from out the heart of man.  
No squalor could I see, no murk of sin

    Those streets within;  
    It was all soft and bright,  
    An angel's sight.

Then said my guide again, "Behold his view!"

    And I, all pierced with cold,

    My purged eyes made new,

Was caught into the vision of that love  
    Which all thing dares behold,

    And from above

    Looks down on his great farm;

    Holding within his span

    Not spiritual peaks alone,

The naked beauty of the sinless stone  
    And feathered things

    Therefrom that spread their wings

    And soar,

    But the great world's wide floor—

        The good and harm,

Sweet flower and fruit, foul litter and decay.  
        Yea, more!

The seething herd, the clucking foolish mass

    That grow and breed and pass

    To feed the festering clay:

    All known, all understood,

And because loved, seen to be very good.

## THE LIKENESS

THY children, thy wonderful children, brave,  
generous, free;  
Sent out to the edge of the world, bearing their  
father's likeness everywhere.  
Some thrust forth before they recognised thee,  
Wandering away, ignorant of their family, their  
home:  
Yet bearing their father's likeness everywhere.

Thine undaunted daughters of the slum,  
Faithfully dealing with hopeless intractable life;  
Fostering their broods in the dark basement,  
Down at heel, slattern hair, yet radiant of love and  
of courage,  
Fruitful of fresh souls, new strange disguises for  
thee.

Thy fair and delicate children, made for all glad-  
ness and beauty,  
Suddenly struck with the cruel steel of thy pain;  
And lo! a spark from the fire of thee, spark of  
high-hearted endurance.  
Simply and bravely they suffer; and lit by the blow  
of thy pain,  
The likeness appears, shining out, august, from  
within.

Thy creative sons, sharp tools in the hand of the  
Spirit,  
Dreaming, making, finding, defiant of hardness and  
grief;  
Loving better than father or mother the far-off  
fulfilment—  
Seldom they speak thy name!  
Yet these take their father's likeness everywhere.

Thy naughty ones, rebellious, cunning, adventurous,  
Breaking the toys of their brothers, thrusting their  
tortuous lives athwart the respectable web—  
These too!  
Do these not exhibit thy vigour, thy rude inex-  
haustible freedom,  
Correcting with flushes of passion our colourless  
pictures of God?

Hast thou thy favourite amongst these scattered  
children?  
Hast thou any one of them of whom thou canst  
say: *This is my beloved child?*  
Nay, I think not so.  
Love buildeth her temple,  
Its name is Life:  
It hath columns strong and lovely, deep earth-set  
foundations,  
Gargoyles for the amusement of thine angels, and  
pinnacles glad in the blue.  
And the souls of thy children shall build it, thy  
mark is on every one of them;  
All hast thou made for their office,  
All have their place in thy home.

## BEYOND THE GARDEN

I HAVE a garden, fencèd round  
With thickets that no foot may pass;  
All ordered joys therein are found  
Of flower and fruit and daisied grass  
For touch, taste, scent, and sight. Within the  
brake  
The small tame birds a homely music make.

Rich are my borders, yet beyond  
I know a fiercer life must be:  
I have a deep and secret pond,  
But far away I scent the sea,  
And through the wordless whispers of the wood  
Guess the grave voices of the mighty flood.

A gentle mist of measured rain  
Here comes the summer thirst to slake;  
But far above the viewless plain  
I see the noble tempest break  
In love torrential, eager to invade  
Each striving growing root, each faint upstarting  
blade.

Of moonlit nights, I walk the ledge  
Wherfrom my gateless thickets lean,  
And seek to pierce that prudent hedge,  
To thrust the plaited boughs between.  
Vain! yet I suffer, poised above the steep,  
The strange and stealthy onslights of the deep.

And once, there was a bird that flew  
Far up the foreign clouds among;  
The throbbing of its throat I knew,  
I might not hear its song.  
Swiftly it passed across my narrow sky,  
The silent minstrel of Reality.

That day was anguish; thence no more  
My garden can a pleasaunce seem.  
It is a cage without a door,  
That shuts me from a better dream.  
My foolish twittering birds enslave an ear  
That should another, wilder music hear.

The little scale my senses know  
One note from out that music is;  
In circling rhythms, above, below,  
All form, all colour, and all bliss,  
Besiege my garden ramparts, yet I strain  
To catch those radiant melodies—in vain.

My scented borders drug the mind,  
The summer woods enveil the view.  
Come! winter, with your purging wind,  
When life ebbs low, when leaves are few,  
Come! cut the pathway to that outer night  
Of fierce and seething joys, beyond my shuttered  
sight.

## IN PATRIA

THOU art the all:  
In thee to live and move  
And knowing thee, to love—  
This is to be.

So, whilst we are, from thee we cannot fall;  
We are deep-sunk within that living sea.

We do not know,

As cutting paths we go

Through thy close-woven thought, that life is so.  
We thrust and strive, our diligence to prove,

Thy frontiers to attain;

Yet at the journey's end we come again

(As seems to us)

To the one spot

Where thine unmeasured Point which changeth not

Is goal of every quest

And to all pilgrims rest.

Yea, though our busy dreams with childish art

Plait, turn, and cross

As if they only sought thy final loss;

Yet even thus,

Since thou art all and all desire dost bound

And every height and deep in thee is found

We cannot miss thy heart.

## WHITE MAGIC

JUST now, a sparrow flew across the window space.

I saw keen wings,

I saw unpausing flight

Against the solemn curtains of grey light,  
Against the stubborn forms of distant things:  
And yet his vivid passage could not break  
The timeless spell that broods upon the place

Where I am set to make

With craft and toil

My knitted world

From out the endless coil.

## Some Hand

Has drawn a circle round me where I stand:  
With delicate touch on the invisible air  
He has shut out the circumambient scene  
As by a rampart of containing thought,

And I

Athwart that spiritual screen

Look on a landscape foreign and apart.

The windy smoke is stretched across the sky

In long script strangely curled:

I know not what its hieroglyphs can mean.

With vacant eyes the stucco gables stare:

I know not what their sullen gaze would say  
Of sad and restless souls imprisoned there.

Even my friendly tree seems far away;  
It has no art  
To bridge the gap that he has set between.  
I cannot hear the whisper of the green  
That once did reach my heart.

Within the enchanted ring  
We are alone:  
I, and that other Thing  
Whom I have known—  
When? where?

Ah, once when I was gazing on the stream  
And saw the water mount against the stone  
Smooth, solemn, strong, and irresistible,  
And all fell from me but the unhurried dream  
Of One that is all music and all power,  
Whose will and love  
Confers all meaning and all thing does move—  
That was the hour!  
Oft since, his sudden touch has come to me  
From very far  
And struck the hard doors of the heart ajar,  
And fainted from me as a passing breeze  
Made up of wild and errant melodies.  
Now, circled in beyond the pale of speech,  
At last  
Other to each  
In marriage gift sublime  
May blest completion bring.  
Whilst swift succession beats upon the ring  
And darting time

Bird-quick across the window of the mind  
Comes, hovers, and is past,  
Held in this quiet I find  
My Dear, long sought,  
By still surrender bought.  
    Unheld Infinity  
Constrained in love to me.

## FOREST EPIPHANY

CHRIST comes to flower  
Within my wintry wood, as once in Bethlehem:  
The restless kings of wisdom, love, and power  
His light yet leadeth them

Out of the narrow prison of the mind,  
Out of the scented palace of their dream,  
That Face to find  
Which shall the dream fulfil, the thought redeem.

Not far  
To-night the journey of the seeking soul:  
His beckoning star  
Stands still above the goal.

He makes his nest  
Within the living world, safe in its sod.  
There, in each sudden snowdrop manifest,  
The earth shows forth her God.

## DEATH

THIS surely I know—  
However I go,  
Wherever it be,  
You shall be homely to me.  
Yea! though I be wrecked in the infinite sea,  
And the taste of the brine  
As I sink to my sleep  
Be all that I know of the deep:  
Still, if it be so  
I am content  
To give back the life lent,  
To return whence I come;  
And, naked and spent,  
To cease in my home.

## BOND AND FREE

WHEN the sweet morning, like a new-bathed child,  
Comes running o'er the grass  
And all the wild  
Leans out to see him pass:  
'Tis then

The sun-kissed folk that are unseen of men,  
From moon-enchanted meadows of the night  
Haste to acclaim the light.

Where the smooth hill's high crest  
With feathery groves is drest,  
Their ancient altar stands.

Between the meshy leaves their white limbs glance  
In immemorial dance;  
I've glimpsed their hands  
That part the coloured boughs to make  
Pale flashing patterns in the dusky brake.

Theirs is the living country of the soul:  
As happy gipsies through its fruitful fields  
They go. For them it yields  
Sweet secrets and sharp raptures; we,  
Content in earthy hermitage to dwell  
As cave-men carving deep beneath the knoll  
Their twilit citadel,  
Are shut from these.

Their shapes we may not see,  
Nor hear above our head  
Their rhythmic tread  
And chanted melodies.

We, with a bone or two beside the fire,  
Have all our cramped desire;  
And, coming forth to kill  
Clean creatures to our need  
Or rob the little patient patch we till  
Of its maternal seed,  
The arid ritual of our life fulfil.  
How should we know  
The sun-kissed folk, who move—  
Impelled of what wild love?—  
Upon the upland heaths and in the scented mow:  
Who peer between tall trees,  
And on a sudden breeze  
Rush down the grey ignoring city street  
With swiftly-sparkling feet  
To leave behind  
The wistful murmur of an empty wind?

Some potent charms there be  
That can the prisoners of the cave set free;  
Can wash their eyes  
The joyous peoples of the light to see,  
And make them share the gallant enterprise,  
The glad and solemn feasts  
Of that unnumbered throng.  
The hidden song

Of a small blackcap in the thicket set,  
Cold friendly noses of the trustful beasts  
That all our ugly perfidies forget,  
Strange haunting perfumes loosed upon the air:  
All these our ancient heritage declare.

One leaf of marjoram at sunset pressed  
Has oft revealed the country of the blessed.  
Yet still, when evening falls and liberation comes  
On plumy wings  
From the night-scented precinct of our homes  
And all the presences of simple things,  
We creep  
More deep  
Our fetid cave within  
And draw about our limbs some slaughtered skin.

## FRIDAY NIGHT

In certain convents on every Friday night, the nuns scourge themselves; each kneeling in her own cell, with the door open upon the corridor. A verse of the *Miserere* is intoned between each stripe.

MUST I take  
The scourge in hand for Jesu's sake?  
Kneel, and cry  
"Mercy, mercy! God most high!"

Lord, I quail  
At the Miserere's wail,  
Yet I know  
Love should joy to suffer so.

Give me grace  
And courage for a little space,  
Loving thee  
So to bear love's penalty.

For the blame  
Of all who mock thy holy name  
I would give  
This my flesh, that they may live.

For the wrong  
Wrought by evil wills and strong,  
Take the price  
Of my body's sacrifice.

Take my all!  
Hold my heart and soul in thrall!

Thou canst not  
Take the splendour of my lot.

To the crash  
Of the slow-descending lash  
As I bow,  
Lo! I am thy partner now.

I am found  
With thee at the pillar bound;  
I have worn  
Bitter crown of budding thorn.

Yea! a part  
Of thy dread atoning art,  
Never done,  
Is the penance of the nun.

Holy pain!  
Smite, ah! smite me once again.  
Precious blood!  
Add my drop to thy great flood.

• • • •  
—What is this?  
Shall I dare to seek my bliss  
In the grief  
He endures for our relief?

Shall I dare  
Claim the right of entrance there,  
Where alone  
God doth for his world atone?

'Twas in pride  
Angels from his vision died;  
And shall I  
Set my little hurt so high?

Lo! I kneel  
Full of wounds thy stripes shall heal.  
Holy pain!  
Make me, make me whole again!

First to dread,  
Now to shame, have I been led:  
Lord, I pray,  
Purge the smears of self away.

By this smart  
Shatter and re-make my heart;  
Snatch my love  
From the coils that pride hath wove.

Stablish me  
In thy Spirit strong and free;  
Let the voice  
Thou hast quenched, again rejoice.

In thy sight  
Shining with a sacred light,  
Only then  
Shall my wounds avail for men.

## MARCH MUSIC

Impleta sunt, quae concinit  
David fideli carmine,  
Dicendo nationibus  
Regnavit a ligno Deus.

ALL down the windy woods, along the throbbing hedge,

And in the starting sedge,

Yea, in all choirs and places where they sing,

I hear its growing cadences that ring;

Noblest of the processionals of earth,

The great Vexilla Regis of the spring:

And topping the soft hill

With sudden joy of emerald fluttering,

Against the sky's bright edge

I see the mighty banners of the King.

Yet not unheralded

The hosts of life to victory are led:

Lo! near at hand

His little band

Of harbingers a subtle music make;

Tight scrolls crisp-rolled

Pricking from out the mould

Along the margins of the dusky brake.

Come, put your ear

To the brown earth, and hear

The glad green shout

With which each baby leaf thrusts out  
Toward the clear:  
Leaps to achieve its part  
In the symphonic poem that breaks from Nature's  
heart.

Exultant, sacred mirth  
That waits upon the vernal ecstasy  
Of birth!  
Why does she joy?  
To what supreme employ  
Destines the budding spray?  
Does she,  
As some proud mother, see  
Entangled in her children's downy hair  
Meshed glories that declare  
An unguessed empery  
Of life to be?  
The catkins tasselled grey,  
Enaureoled  
In heavenly gold,  
The wonder of the thorn—  
Are these the earnts of a distant morn  
That shall the woodland dress  
With a dread fruitfulness?

Ah, yes!  
As in old time  
Joy was august, sublime,  
And priests could then afford  
To dance before the Lord,

Plaiting the patterns sweet  
With swift enraptured feet  
That worshipped in the ways of metric loveliness,  
Then at the altar made their sacrifice complete:  
So does the vernal play  
Perpetually invite  
The deep interior sight  
Unto the shrine  
Which makes all growth divine.  
So does the flowery mist  
That lies upon the ground  
Prepare a Victim's way;  
And every forest sound  
Proclaim a Eucharist.

Lo! on those eager branches shall be hung  
That Life of which the woods have ever sung;  
Making themselves soft harps for the hand o' the  
rain  
To whisper of his pain,  
And, 'neath the poignant bowing of the wind  
Subdued to move,  
Crying to all mankind  
The secret of the sacrament of love.  
Yea! from a Tree  
God shall shine out at thee;  
For this doth Nature grow,  
To this the kingly banners forward go.

## A PORTRAIT

*I have a friend ; as the world understands  
A thing of leisured days  
And gracious ways.  
She's rare, and fine ; her very hands,  
The subtle contour of the face,  
The gentle manner that commands,  
Declare the artistry of race.  
The world approves her as she plays  
With sweet, sedate, unfaltering art  
Within its solemn ritual dance  
Her carefully appointed part :  
To circle, set to partners, or advance.*

Thus seems she to the world. But I  
Have seen her soul rush out on wings of prayer  
Toward another sky.  
As a small bird that beats toward the height  
And, all-forgetting, seeks the utmost light,  
So have I seen her gallant, eager soul  
Love-driven to dare  
The giddy spaces of uncharted air :  
Here in the hand a little panting thing  
That folds a trembling wing  
Tight to the throbbing body—there,  
Sharp in ascent  
On great adventure bent,  
One mighty craving for a mightier whole.

And for this secret bird-life that we share,—  
Though mine the low and steadfast hovering  
And hers the upward fling—  
We feel and find  
Strange mutual ardours, memories, fears  
Which each to each shall ever bind:  
For these, when baffling veils are shed,  
Make the rapt friendships of the dead.  
We are as those who, being bold  
To lift them from the prudent ground  
And trust the feathered soul, have found—  
Not knowing what they sought or why they flew—  
A way beyond the flowing years,  
Beyond the swiftly-turning spheres,  
Into the depth and height,  
The length and breadth of an Unmeasured Light.  
These breathed an hour the vivid air of grace,  
And knew  
The all-sufficing wonder of wild space.  
Thence coming back,  
They never can forget the viewless track:  
And though with zest  
And loving industry of twig and moss  
In the safe hedge they set the woven nest,  
They know their loss;  
Dream of the sharp delight,  
The wind that was a flame,  
The wild sweet song, the passion without name,  
They knew not they possest.  
When the night-skies are clear  
And baby birds are sleeping,

These, their maternal office steadfast keeping,  
Sudden their sheltering wings will half unfold  
In agony of longing uncontrolled.  
Then whispered notes of those intemperate songs  
Learned in the freedom of the upper air  
The homesick heart declare:  
The homesick heart that faithful is, but longs  
Once more to spread the wing  
And mount and sing;  
Braving the height, the terror, and the pain  
If so it may attain.

## COMMUNION IN DARKNESS

I DID not know  
That thou wast there:  
Yet even so  
Shall not the blind be fed?  
And didst thou not to these thy healthful gifts  
declare?  
Because they had not light  
To find thee out by sight,  
Were they not led  
By touch to find  
The God they might not gaze on, being blind?  
  
And wilt thou not again  
Reach through the dark to men?  
Shall not thy hand  
Nourish those poor, who may not understand  
The intricate machinery of grace?  
Is it not much  
That these, who might not recognise thy face,  
Still seek thy touch?  
When hast thou said  
That only those who see, shall taste the living  
bread?

## DIVINE IGNORANCE

(A SAINT SPEAKS)

THIS is my prayer, that I shall never find  
The secret of thy Name;  
Never attain to bind  
The zone of thought about thy formless flame.

Grant me this grace, that I may never hear  
The one resolving chord  
Which shall at last make clear  
The deep harmonic mystery of my Lord.

Shield thou my sense, that I may never know  
All that thy love can be;  
Let not my probing go  
To the dread heart of thy divinity.

Wrapped in thy quiet, I do but ask to taste  
The sweetness of that night;  
Lost in thy trackless waste,  
There shall the soul find fulhead of delight.

The anguish of thy sacred dark caress,  
Thy love beyond our span,  
Self's loss in thine excess:  
These be the torment and the joy of man.

## THE SECRET PEOPLE

THERE is a Hidden Thing  
Whom all the worlds declare  
But none disclose:  
Who lights the rose  
And breathes upon the air  
Magical scents of thyme and southernwood,  
To whose design  
The tiger moth conforms his feathered wing,  
Who makes the linnet's sudden note divine  
And folds the arum's hood.  
All who are touched of its white flame,  
Swayed by its sudden wind—  
These have the Sparkling Stone and the New Name;  
And, since their secret passion is the same,  
They are made parts of the adoring mind  
That cries in every eager growing thing,  
“ My Dear, my God, my King.”

These, where the swelling downs by inward dream  
Uplifted are toward the fields of space,  
Discern the foreign gleam  
That lights their face  
With a shy grace.  
They are the friends of loveliness, and know  
Its holy rapture and its hidden pain:  
The anguished stretch of waters to the moon,

The gay meek kindly rain,  
The fragile splendour of the budding sloe,  
The stone-pine's slow and difficult increase,  
The breathless expectation of high noon  
And benediction of the dusk—all these  
Moods of the living earth, emblems of love,  
Wherewith she may her mighty Husband move  
To fruitful new delight, fresh impulse of desire,  
Stir in their ardent souls. The vernal fire  
Burns them to exaltation. They would thrust  
Young shoots from out the dust,  
New subtle forms unfold,  
New patterns weave  
Upon the curious cloth of life, and leave—  
The petals of their passion fallen down  
To help the faithful mould,  
The noble crown  
Of swift-forgotten deeds  
Blown in light plumpy seeds—  
Some living germ of loveliness to raise  
Fresh children to his praise.

They move within a vivid universe  
Quick with a crescent life that cannot die,  
Their friendships stretch beyond the aeon's edge  
And touch the powdered fringes of the sky  
Where radiant Powers rehearse  
New dramas of creation. They are given  
Of loveliness to come the secret pledge;  
For them the veils of the abyss are riven.  
They know the bed

Whereon the stars bring forth fresh births sublime,  
And hear the solemn tread  
Of worlds to be  
That crowd the pathways of Eternity  
And shake the doors of Time.

The shining dead—  
The eager dead, who are alone alive—  
Throng in the cloistered chambers of their brain,  
In all their efforts strive,  
Think in their thoughts, invade  
Their coloured and unconquerable dreams.  
So these, yet mortal, are immortal made;  
They are aware  
Of sudden intimations, quickening streams  
Of energy untainted of the flesh,  
And in their deeds attain  
New splendour of fulfilment. Through the mesh  
Of baffling sense, sometimes upon the hair  
They know a hand in benediction laid,  
And feel a Presence there.

None mark them as they go,  
Nor guess the secret converse that they hold  
With all their kindred: how the dawns and dews  
To them are visitations of new power,  
How their unresting blood  
Beats to the measure of the mighty flood  
And thrills to the sharp passage of the hour.  
Only their brethren know  
That glad and friendly presence. From the mow

See how the ox-eye lifts her peopled flower  
To greet them as they pass,  
And the wise hedgehog parts the tufted grass  
To tell them of his news.  
Each woolly fold  
Cries to their heart  
Its immemorial language understood;  
They have immediate speech  
With the young emerald beech  
And are made part  
Of the authentic nations of the wood.

Whilst others walk with prudent sturdy feet  
And careful eyes  
Upon the planet's crust,  
Each in his narrow body all complete,  
These have thrown down the barriers that enspan  
The cramped sad world of man  
And keep him in  
Safe-sheltered from his kin.  
Yea, these being wise  
The murmurous runes of loveliness to trust,  
Have plunged within the mighty rhythm of life;  
So have they gained the freedom of the skies,  
Surrendered to the strife  
Have found the primal peace.  
These from their narrow body have release;  
Being made part of the adoring mind  
Which cries in every living growing thing,  
“ My Dear, my God, my King.”

## THE ANCHORITE

“ Wherefore, my dere Sisteres, luv your windows as lyttill as ye may, and see they be smalle. . . . Ye clothe on them shalle be twofolde: blacke clothe, ye crosse wite.”—*The Acrene Riwle*.

## OLD COVENANT

How shall I dare, best-loved, to lift mine eyes  
So high to thee;  
Risk the effulgence of those ardent skies,  
Aspire to see  
The radiant clouds of joy and pain that rise  
About the fourfold wheels of swift Reality?

Not thus shall fettered souls communion make,  
Nor shall they come  
At thy fierce torrent's brink their thirst to slake:  
Where the white foam  
Catches the Uncreated Light, to break  
In coloured beauty, there they may not build their home.

But as the love-enclosèd anchorite  
Upon his window sets  
A dusky veil that checks the flooding light,  
And likewise lets  
The freedom of his all-adventuring sight;  
(Lest, drunk with noontide splendour, he forgets—

Like a poor brand made radiant of thy flame—  
    His impotence  
And the shut cell accepted in love's name)  
    So I, for my defence  
Against the pride that wars upon thy claim,  
Set between me and thee the close-wove web of  
sense.

## NEW COVENANT

I hung the curtain when the worlds began,  
    When as a spark  
Of spirit-stuff obedient to thy plan,  
    I sought this dark.  
Glad novice, to the cloistered earth I ran,  
And on mine anchor-hold I set thy mark.

Within the twilit room of self confined  
    Long did I bide,  
The twofold cloth upon the heart and mind  
    Thy face to hide:  
To the bright wonder of thy love made blind  
That filled the world upon the farther side.

I did not know that love had tried to win  
    Within my dream,  
Against the sheeted black of sense and sin  
    Pressing a poignant beam.  
Sudden I saw fair light that filtered in  
And laid upon the floor a narrow gleam.

I saw the holy ray, the slit that went  
    From depth to height,  
Yet left on either side my senses pent  
    In deeper night:  
I thrust an eager hand into the rent,  
And tore the tissues that withstood thy light.

Crosswise the wound: crosswise the radiance spread  
    My cell to fill.  
Blessed daring! and oh, courtesy most dread  
    That my poor skill  
Could thus accept, and with man's cunning wed  
The awful operations of the Will.

Fourfold thy Name; fourfold the primal spell  
    Our love did then rehearse,  
Achieving heaven and piercing deepest hell.  
    Pure, generous, fierce,  
Wide-armed it stands, embracing all; to tell  
The perfect number of thy universe.

## NIHIL LONGE DEO

As sleeping infants in their dream despair  
We range, and grope thy breast:  
But wake to find that haven everywhere  
And we already blest.

## THRUSHES

I THINK the thrush's voice is more like God's  
Than many a preacher's telling of the Word;  
I think the mother-thrush, who turns the sods  
To find fat earth-worms for her baby bird—  
And, worn by her maternal toil,  
With busy eye and mild  
That marks each subtle movement of the soil  
Patiently tends upon her greedy child—  
She is the feathery image of that grace  
Which spends itself to feed our thankless race.

## THOUGHT'S A STRANGE LAND

THOUGHT's a strange land.  
Some dig its fields with diligence,  
Some pass through it steadfastly as pilgrims to  
    the Sepulchre,  
Some haste in dust and heat—toward what goal?  
Some climb its difficult hills and clouds receive  
    them from our sight.  
Some take a neat villa, and plant geraniums in  
    their borders,  
And test the drains and trim the wandering roses,  
And set up a paling to hide the restless road.

I'm a gipsy therein.

I go leisurely upon the highways,  
I try the lanes and trespass in the copses;  
I love the soft edge of the straight-driven road,  
The bramble and nuts, the comfrey and wild carrot,  
The campion and crane's-bill deep in the tufted  
    grass.  
Mine are the wild strawberries:  
I can spare others the turnips.  
There's always a rabbit for my pot.

Thought's a strange land.  
It has square, fenced fields for honest farmers—

To each his own field: they never look over the hedge to see what their neighbours are growing. It has gardens enclosed, full of fragrant and coloured things.

I love the wild places best.

Others may grow admirable cauliflowers,

Crisp chrysanthemums in pots,

Plump calceolarias if they have a mind to them,

Dahlias full of earwigs,

Fuchsias full of sensibility.

(Thought's a strange land!)

But I'm the one that hears the gossip of the waters,

The mysterious whisper of the dew:

I prefer the voices of the aspen to the clack of the threshing machine.

Thought's a strange land.

It's full of small delicate plants, of lonely and solemn spaces

Where the sky is wide and the earth turns under the stars.

It's there I would be,

Touching with love the exquisite blossoms of dream.

There's many an old pasture where I pitch my tent at twilight,

Where the fairy rings are written and the daisies start to my hand:

There's many a lonely fell and rocky valley,

And drink for the gipsy in every enchanted stream.

Thought's a strange land.  
Far off, a long day's journey, there's a marsh that  
stretches to the sea.  
(The sea! the sea!)  
It's a place of mystery and danger, the earth shakes  
beneath the feet;  
I leave my old horse behind when I venture there.  
What do they know of it, who till the fields and  
herd within the houses:  
Of the strange grey plants, the sudden pools, the  
wide, the white horizons,  
The narrow salttings, where the secret waters come  
Creeping between the banks, bringing the solemn  
impulse of the ocean,  
The stretching fingers of the deep,  
Into the very heart of the measured land?  
Tall birds breed there:  
They nest between the rushes,  
And hunt the silent edges of the shore,  
And go on their occasions to the sea.

There's news to be had in the marshes—  
A salted wind, sharp taste of the hidden wave:  
There on the fringes of thought when the night is  
falling  
I'll wait the invading tide.

## TRAMPS

SEE! the trees on the highway margin  
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.  
Still they stand; and the road runs ever.  
Still they stand; and the tramps go by.

Down the way which the mind has driven  
All the wilds of the world between,  
Life goes by on her ceaseless journey;  
Steadfast set to an end unseen.

Shameless past and a nameless future,  
Tramping, tramping the roads along—  
Life, that burns in a vagrant body;  
Life, that goes to a vagrant's song.

Upward thrust from the shades of spirit,  
Outward thrust from the womb of things,  
Vile and battered, august and holy:  
Life, invincible life, that sings.

Sings a song of a great becoming,  
Sings a song of unceasing strife:  
Seething thought and creative passion  
Taking form in a vagrant life.

Blindly cutting a path to freedom,  
Steadfast set to a shrouded goal;  
Urgent life in a wastrel body,  
Ardent life in a wastrel soul.

See! the trees on the highway margin  
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.  
Still they stand; and the road runs ever.  
Still they stand; and the tramps go by.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIED APRIL 23, 1616

AND then—the rest?  
What did he find  
In the unfettered universe of mind,  
To whom one fragment of our star revealed,  
    Complete and unconcealed,  
The maze of various man, in coloured music  
wrought:  
    God's rich creative thought  
Of ardour, grief, and laughter all compact.  
Yea! more, beyond the patch of fenced fact,  
Where at the edge of dream the air's alive with  
    wings,  
Showed him the hidden world of delicate fair things ?

With what new zest,  
His inward vision healed  
Of rheumy time, and from the clipping zone  
    Of space set free,  
He roamed those meadows of eternity  
Where the storm blows that comes from the  
    unknown  
To shake the crazy windows of the soul  
    With gusts of strange desire!  
Thrust by that favouring gale

Did he set out, as Prospero, to sail  
The lonely splendours of the Nameless Sea ?

Where did he make the land ?

Upon what coasts, what sudden magic isles ?  
And what quick spirits met he on the strand ?  
What new mysterious loves swifter than fire  
Streaming from out the Love that ever smiles,  
What musical sweet shapes, what things grotesque  
and dear

We know not here,

What starry songs of what exultant quire

Now fill the span

Of his wide-open thought, who grasped the heart  
of man ?

Saints have confessed

That by deep gazing they achieve to know  
The hiddenness of God, his rich delight;

And so

There's a keen love some poets have possessed

Sharper than sight

To prick the dark that wraps our spirits round  
And, beyond time, see men in its own light.

Those look upon his face,

These in a glass have found

The moving pageant of his eager will:

All the nobility and naughtiness,

Simplicity and skill

Of living souls, that do our dusk redeem

With flaming deed and strangely-smouldering  
dream.

Great contemplator of humanity!  
'Twas thus you saw, and showed to us again  
The one divine immortal comedy:  
Horror and tears, laughter and loveliness,  
    All rapture and all pain  
Held in one unity's immense embrace,  
    Set in one narrow place.  
Now, in the unwalled playhouse of the True  
You know the life from which that drama drew.

## THE LAST IGNORANCE

IF I knew!

The world's full of women to-day  
Who have nothing else to say,  
Only one question to ask.  
Does death devour or release ?  
Is it a perilous thing ?

What does it bring—

New battles, or passionless peace ?  
Is beauty the terrible mask  
Of a God that loves death and decay ?

What of the soul ? does he save ? does he slay ?

If I knew !

O the dark and the empty strangeness !  
The in-pressing wonder and dread !  
What does it mean to be dead ?

My own, my dear,

Whither has life consigned you ?

What are the fetters that bind you ?

Perhaps you are near

Yet holden of speech—

Too near for my reach

As I stretch my soul out through the desolate air.

And then, are you busy there ?

(If I knew !)

The hands full of skill

To interpret your will,

The eyes glad and keen  
For the wonderful scene;  
Do you miss them now, or is all made new?  
(How one gropes for a clue!)

What's it like to be dead?  
Fresh colour, fresh song?  
A soul fully fed?  
A forgetting of wrong?  
O for a word, an assurance of you!  
I sit and I dream  
And I stare at the sky  
Just before dusk, when it's clear and we seem  
To look beyond sight  
To the sources of light.  
Then, one can descry  
(The sunshine all spent)  
A path love may tread  
To the world's outer rim,  
And illumine the dead  
Though here it be dim.  
Should my love reach to you  
Pressing through—  
Though never a gleam  
My darkness redeem—  
Still I were content.  
If I knew.

## THE DREAMER IN WAR-TIME

As I went out by Vision-gate  
The timid said to me,  
“ Too late you come! too late—too late!  
The light has left the sea,  
The torrent of the night’s in spate,  
The wolves of fear are free.”

I left the gate, I went my way  
Where faint the pathway showed;  
Though black and harsh the shadows lay,  
And fierce the darkness flowed,  
Though Horror in the night held sway,  
I kept the dreamer’s road.

For there were hosts who went before  
And cried, “ O dull and blind!  
Ye loiterers at the Vision-door,  
Your goal is here to find:  
All that your hungry hearts adore,  
And all your hopes divined.

“ Long time you went in dust and heat  
Along the sunny track  
Your old accustomed dream to greet;  
And turned and hastened back,  
Because the wolves of fear were fleet,  
Because the night grew black.

“ But those who come through Vision-gate  
    This angry dark to face,  
They run to greet their spirit’s mate,  
    They go to love’s embrace;  
For them, the wicket opens straight  
    Upon the wayless place.

“ It gives upon no sheltered lane,  
    It gives upon the Whole;  
The sacred web of joy and pain,  
    The vast unfinished scroll  
Where dying hands have written plain  
    The passion of the soul.”

## THE NAVAL RESERVE

AUGUST 4, 1914

FROM the undiscovered deep  
Where the blessed lie at ease—  
Since the ancient navies keep  
Empire of the heavenly seas—  
Back they come, the mighty dead,  
Quick to serve where they have led.

Rushing on the homeward gale,  
Swift they come, to seek their place  
Where the grey flotillas sail,  
Where the children of their race  
Now against the foe maintain  
All they gave their lives to gain.

Rank on rank, the admirals  
Rally to their old commands:  
Where the crash of battle falls,  
There the one-armed hero stands.  
Loud upon his phantom mast  
Speak the signals of the past.

Where upon the friendly wave  
Stand our squadrons as of old,  
Where the lonely deed and brave  
Shall the ancient torch uphold,  
Strive for England, side by side,  
Those who live and those who died.

## ENGLAND AND THE SOLDIER

WHAT are the thoughts that England sends to her  
soldier?

Patient and proud they are, eager and stern to  
endure:

Faith in the cause, hope for the end, love maternal  
and glad—

These shape her thoughts for the soldier.

All the peace of England waiting to caress him,  
Homely texture of roads, fragrance of autumn  
gardens—

The dahlia flaunting its standard, the aster starring  
the sod—

Whisper of falling leaves in the golden coppice,  
Evening mist white on the solemn fells;  
With these does she refresh her soldier's mind.

England, folded in the twilight,  
Gazing with shrouded eyes across her encircling sea:  
England, holding on her bosom  
Many a village street with infrequent windows  
shining,

Theatre of sober tasks, of gentle seasonal change.

England wakeful in the night,

Glitter of streets and clang of the coloured tram:

Work and rest and home, the ordered days as of old,  
Now seen through the mist of war, impossibly dear.

All this, says England to her soldier,  
All this is yours and mine, for it we fight and endure;  
For it we offer our lives, side by side on the field,  
Suffer the anguish and thirst and the terrible  
    hospital train,  
Or bitter of heart are led to exile in alien lands.

    Never alone, my soldier.

Your wounds are England's wounds,  
Your labour and gain are hers,  
With you I thrust forth to battle,  
With you are my frontiers found.  
I am there in the horror and pain, the effort, the  
    splendour, the joy;  
And, falling in the fight, England receives her child.

## CANDLEMAS, 1915

In Roman Catholic churches on February 2, candles are blessed and distributed to the congregation, and the *Nunc Dimittis* is sung.

IN the past years,  
We joyed to play the mystery of old;  
Strange poem, and sweet  
Conclusion of Incarnate Love that told  
How a new light was to the Gentiles brought,  
A clean and holy light, to pierce the glooms of  
thought.  
We lit our candles to enray the dim,  
Gave each to each the flame that figured him:  
Yet, in that distant day, the darkness held no fears.

But now all's changed: we, tempest-driven,  
To the great night are given.  
Beneath our feet  
The puzzled world is reeling to despair,  
And on its black horizon there's a glare  
That mocks our little light.  
Dare we, in such a day,  
Through all the drifting cohorts of our dead,  
And across fields wherfrom the lovely life has fled,  
Carry the torch of faith upon its way,

Fulfil the ancient rite?  
As sudden lightning mars  
The kindly radiance of eternal stars,  
So does the splendour of his fury shame  
That small, dear flame.

Yet, when the storm is done,  
And ere the promised rising of the sun  
Makes all thing new,  
There comes a black and stilly hour, when all  
The quiet stars shine out perpetual  
And every homely lamp that seemed to cease  
Burns with young beauty in the empty place,  
Because the lights are few.  
Then, perchance, one  
Raising his anguished face,  
His poor grey face, from those swept fields of pain,  
And peering in the dark before the day,  
Most glad shall greet  
Our humble light again,  
And say,  
“Mine eyes have seen, and I depart in peace.”

## ANY ENGLISHWOMAN

MAY 1915

ENGLAND's in flower.

On every tree speared canopies unfold,  
And sacred beauty crowns the lowliest weeds  
Lifting their eager faces from the mould:

Even in this hour

The unrelented pressure of the spring  
Thrysts out new lovely life, unfaltering—  
Toward what deeds?  
What dreadful blossoming?

Ah, the red spines upon the curving briar,  
They tear the heart  
Great with desire  
And sick with sleepless pain  
For one that comes not again.

There's horror in the fragrance of the air,  
Torment in this intolerable art.

White petals on the pear!

Yet, peering there,  
I see beyond the rapture of young green  
And passion of pale fire  
The glutton Death, who smiles upon the scene.

Last night there was a sudden wind that blew  
    My joyful branches through.  
Yesterday a rich blossom on the spray,  
    To-day  
All the sweet promise of life is vanished away:  
Yea, of its ardent petals just a few  
    White on the ground  
    I found.  
Bury them quick—I must not see them decay.

Others may know the triumph of the year  
    And coming of the clear  
Still days of autumn to redeem our grief.  
For them the coloured bough, the noble sheaf:  
    But I shall see  
The petals that fell too soon from the blossoming  
    tree,  
    And the stain  
There on the path, where they rest in the sorrowful  
    rain.

## THE RETURN

OUR dead are coming home again:  
Softly they come, on silent feet.  
Even as with joy we gave our men,  
    So their return is sweet.

Together they went forth. Now one by one  
They slip into the ancient place;  
And we, that thought ourselves alone,  
    Glimpse the remembered face—

Meet in the shattered homestead of the heart  
The old familiar touch, the faithful ways,  
The dear known hands, that still possess the art  
    To mend our broken days.

## NON-COMBATANTS

NEVER of us be said  
That we reluctant stood  
As sullen children, and refused to dance  
To the keen pipe that sounds across the fields of  
France.

Though shrill the note and wild,  
Though hard the steps and slow,  
The dancing floor defiled,  
The measure full of woe,  
And dread  
The solemn figure that the dancers tread,  
We faltered not. Of us, this word shall not be said.

Never of us be said  
We had no war to wage,  
Because our womanhood,  
Because the weight of age,  
Held us in servitude.  
None sees us fight,  
Yet we in the long night  
Battle to give release  
To all whom we must send to seek and die for peace.  
When they have gone, we in a twilit place  
Meet Terror face to face,  
And strive  
With him, that we may save our fortitude alive.

Theirs be the hard, but ours the lonely bed.  
Nought were we spared—of us, this word shall not  
be said.

Never of us be said  
We failed to give God-speed to our adventurous  
dead.  
Not in self-pitying mood  
We saw them go,  
When they set forth upon the wings of pain:  
So glad, so young,  
As birds whose fairest lays are yet unsung  
Dart to the height  
And thence pour down their passion of delight,  
Their passing into melody was turned.  
So were our hearts uplifted from the low,  
Our griefs to rapture burned;  
And, mounting with the music of that throng,  
Cutting a path athwart infinity,  
Our puzzled eyes  
Achieved the healing skies  
To find again  
Each wingèd spirit as a speck of song  
Embosomed in thy deep eternity.  
Though from our homely fields that feathered joy  
has fled  
We murmur not. Of us, this word shall not be said.

## INVOCATION

THOU source of all who seek to sing,  
    Forgive me that my verses fail,  
Forgive my clumsy words that cling  
    About thine all-revealing veil  
    Woven of sound, that should impart  
    The vision of the poet's heart.

I too have heard thy ceaseless song,  
    I have discerned thy radiant feet  
That flash in rhythmic dance among  
    The squalors of the city street:  
    And in its gutters every day  
    Have seen thy ragged angels play.

For deep the secret world within,  
    I feel thy stirring soft and strange,  
And know all growing things my kin  
    In this, thy nursery of change:  
    In every kitten's fluffy dress  
    Our Father's cunning I confess.

How shall I tell what I have known?  
    For thy great pipe my breath is faint;  
With generous hand thy love hath sown,  
    Its harvest fields I may not paint.  
    Though every sense cry out thy Name,  
    My song may not declare the same.

Yet since the humble lover can  
Ask all things, as thy seers have told,  
Within thy mighty metric span  
My faltering song do thou enfold:  
That in thy symphony of grace  
The note of failure find its place.

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